

Week Ending Friday, June 13, 1997

The President's Radio Address

June 7, 1997

Good morning. This morning I want to talk about one of America's greatest challenges and greatest opportunities: Conquering the forces of hatred and division that still exist in our society so that we can move forward into the 21st century as one America.

We are clearly the world's most diverse democracy, bound together across all of our differences by a belief in the basic dignity of every human being's life and liberty and the right of every American who lives by our laws and lives up to his or her responsibilities to share in the full promise of the greatest nation on Earth.

Especially as we move into a new century, with its global economy and its global society, our rich diversity is a powerful strength, if we respect it. We are clearly stronger as a nation when we use the full talents of all of our people, regardless of race or religious faith, national origin or sexual orientation, gender or disability. Much of America's story is really the stories of wave after wave of citizens struggling over our full history for full equality of opportunity and dignified treatment.

We stand today in sharp contrast to the racial, ethnic, tribal, and religious conflicts which continue to claim so many lives all around the world. But we have still not purged ourselves of all bigotry and intolerance. We still have our ugly words and awful violence, our burned churches and bombed buildings.

In a predominantly white suburb of Atlanta, Georgia, last month, an African-American couple was greeted with racial epithets as they moved into their new home. Just a week later, their home was sprayed with gunfire in the middle of the night. In a recent incident right here in Washington, DC, three men accosted a gay man in a park, forced him at gunpoint to go under a bridge, and

beat him viciously while using antigay epithets. Last fall in Los Angeles, a Jewish student's dormitory room was bombed with a quarter stick of dynamite, and a swastika was drawn near the door.

Such hate crimes, committed solely because the victims have a different skin color or a different faith or are gays or lesbians, leave deep scars not only on the victims but on our larger community. They weaken the sense that we are one people with common values and a common future. They tear us apart when we should be moving closer together. They are acts of violence against America itself. And even a small number of Americans who harbor and act upon hatred and intolerance can do enormous damage to our efforts to bind together our increasingly diverse society into one nation realizing its full promise.

As part of our preparation for the new century, it is time for us to mount an all-out assault on hate crimes, to punish them swiftly and severely, and to do more to prevent them from happening in the first place. We must begin with a deeper understanding of the problem itself. That is why I'm convening a special White House conference on hate crimes this November 10th. We'll bring to the White House victims of hate crimes and their families to understand why the impact of these acts runs so much deeper than the crimes themselves. We'll bring together law enforcement experts and leading officials from Congress and the Justice Department to take a serious look at the existing laws against hate crime and consider ways to improve enforcement and to strengthen them. We'll bring together community and religious leaders to talk about solutions that are already making a real difference in communities all across our Nation.

In preparation for the conference, Attorney General Reno has begun a thorough review of the laws concerning hate crimes and the ways in which the Federal Government

can make a difference to help us to build a more vigorous plan of action. But of course, the fight against hatred and intolerance must be waged not just through our laws but in our hearts as well.

A newborn child today does not know how to hate or stereotype another human being; that behavior must be learned. And intolerance does not generally begin with criminal acts. Instead, it begins with quiet acts of indignity: the bigoted remark, the African-American who is followed around the grocery store by a suspicious clerk, the gay or lesbian who is denied a job, the Hispanic or Asian who is targeted because of unfair stereotypes. To truly move forward as one community, it is just not enough to prevent acts of violence to our bodies, we must prevent acts of violence to our spirits.

By convening the very first White House conference on hate crimes this November, America can confront the dark forces of division that still exists. We can shine the bright light of justice, humanity, and harmony on them. We'll take a serious look at the laws and remedies that can make a difference in preventing hate crimes. We'll have the frank and open dialog we need to build one America across all difference and diversity. And together, we will move closer to the day when acts of hatred are no longer a stain on our community or our conscience, closer to the day when we can redeem for ourselves and show to the world the 220-year-old promise of our Founders, that we are "One Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11:47 a.m. on June 5 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on June 7.

Remarks Announcing the Proposed "Cloning Prohibition Act of 1997"

June 9, 1997

Thank you very much, Dr. Shapiro, for that fine set of remarks and for your report. I thank all the members of the President's Committee of Advisers. I'd also like to thank Secretary Shalala and Dr. Varmus for being here today, along with the President's Ad-

viser on Science and Technology, Dr. Jack Gibbons. And I thank Congressman Brown and Congresswoman Morella for being here and for their interest in this important issue. But mostly let me say again, I am profoundly grateful to the National Bioethics Advisory Commission and to Dr. Harold Shapiro for preparing this report on a difficult topic in a short period of time, requiring an extensive inquiry. Your commitment and your courage in breaking new ground in policy is deeply appreciated.

As the Vice President has said and all of us know, we live in an era of breathtaking scientific discovery. More and more, our future in the world depends upon advances in science and technology. And more and more, the scientific community will influence the course of the future and the lives that our children will lead in the new century that is upon us.

As I said in my commencement address at Morgan State University last month, our scientific explorations must be guided by our commitment to human values, to the good of society, to our basic sense of right and wrong. Nothing makes the necessity of that moral obligation more clear than the troubling possibility that these new animal-cloning techniques could be used to create a child. That is why I acted in March to ban the use of Federal funds for cloning human beings and to urge the private sector to observe the ban voluntarily while we initiated a national dialog on the risks and the responsibilities of such a possibility, and why I asked this Commission to issue this report.

For 3 months, the Commission has rigorously explored the scientific, moral, and spiritual dimensions of human cloning. It has talked to leading scientists and religious leaders, to philosophers and families, to patient advocates and to the general public. From many opinions and beliefs, as Dr. Shapiro said, one unanimous conclusion has emerged: Attempting to clone a human being is unacceptably dangerous to the child and morally unacceptable to our society.

I believe strongly that this conclusion reflects a national consensus, and I believe personally that it is the right thing to do. Today I am sending legislation to the Congress that prohibits anyone in either public or private